עדת אל

GOD's COURT:

WHEREIN
The DIGNITY and DUTY
OF
Judges and **Magistrates**,
Is shew'd in a

SERMON

Preached at the

ASSISES

Held at
KINGSTON upon *THAMES*,
July 26. 1683.

By THOMAS WILLIS, D.D. Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

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To the Worſhipful

ANTHONY RAWLINS, Eſq;

High Sheriff of the County

OF

SURREY.

Honoured SIR,

THIS *World, a moſt ſtately Structure, was made to be a* Temple *to the Eternal Divinitie. For* Religion, *which is the Holy Worſhip of GOD, is the great End of the Life and Being of man, for whom this World was made. Man is both the* World's Orator *and* God's Prieſt: *He, in the behalf of all the Creatures, is to ſpeak the Praiſes of GOD, and offering them up as a* Spiritual Sacrifice *at GOD's Altar,*

to implore His Aid and Blessing upon all his Undertakings. And for all the Good he receives and enjoys, he is devoutly to give the Glory to GOD.

All Civil Administrations and Secular Affairs are sanctify'd by Religion. The Law of Religion is written in the Nature of man, and its Obligations inforc'd by Reason. The Heathens in all great Affairs, were wont to make humble Addresses to the supposed Divinities they adored. The greatest Persons among them, before they undertook any Matter of Weight or Importance, would have Recourse to some Temple of the Gods, to ask Counsel, to offer up their Vows, and to implore their Aid for a good Success. And when they were guided by Oracles, they proceeded with as much Courage and Confidence, as if they expected to be prosper'd by Miracles, in the Pursuit of their Designs. And when they succeeded in their great Attempts, and attain'd their End, they honour'd their Gods as the Authors of their happiness, by Religious Acknowledgments and rich Oblations. How much more does it become Christians, to whom the only true GOD hath not only reveal'd Himself in the Greatness of His Power, and Glories of his Grace, but also by a firm Covenant, obliged Himself to be their GOD, and to do them Good, in all their Undertakings to make their Addresses to Him for Direction, Assistance and good Success! How well does it become Judges and Magistrates, who have so great a Power and

Trust,

Trust, *both as to the Laws, and the Lives of men, when they enter upon a Work of so great Importance, as the Peace and Welfare of the King and People, to go to meet GOD in* His House, *who as Supreme Lord and Judge presides in* their Court! *'Tis by Authority derived from GOD, they sit to judge men: and 'tis by the Light of His Wisdom, and Influence of his Grace that they err not in Judgment. When a Judge comes out of the* Church *into the* Court, *he appears with more* Majesty, *as a God coming out of Heaven to administer Justice to men on Earth. When a Judge has first hearkened to the Voice of GOD, declaring His Will to him in his Word, he comes with more* Authority *to execute his Office, and ought to be attended with more Regard, as a Person who comes with Instructions from the King, and Injunctions from GOD. And this is agreeable to what the Gospel requires, that* what ever *a man does, he should* do it in the Name of Christ, and for the Glory of God.

Now, Sir, the Solemnity of Religion, *preparatory to the Administration of Justice, was by your Appointment and Command, committed to my Care. The following Discourse prepar'd for that Purpose, tho' somewhat contracted in the Delivery, I have here, in Obedience to your Command, presented to you entire; hoping that, at least, it may serve for a* Memoriall of that Honour, *which His* Majesty, *our most Gracious Sovereign, hath been pleased to confer upon you, in*

appointing

appointing you, in so perillous a Time, to be the Guardian of Publick Justice, *and in accounting you a fit Person to be intrusted with the armed* Power of the whole Countie *for the Defence and Safety both of the King and his People. 'Tis a mighty Trust in a Day of so great Danger, wherein wicked men have made a* bloudy Conspiracy *against the Life of our Sovereign, which ought to be* Ten Thousand *times dearer to every one of us than our own Lives. But that Almighty GOD, in whose Hand are the Lives of Kings, will graciously be pleased long to preserve the precious Life of our present Gracious Sovereign, from all the Machinations of his wicked Enemies, and at last, after a long and happy Reign on Earth, crown him with eternal Glory in Heaven, is (I am well assured) the hearty Desire and Prayer of all his Loyall Subjects, and amongst them of*

2 Sam. 18. 3.

(Worthy Sir)

Your most humble Servant,

Tho. Willis.

עדת אל

GOD's COURT:

AN

ASSISE-SERMON;

SHEWING

The DIGNITY and DUTY

OF

Judges and Magistrates.

PSAL. LXXXII. 1.

GOD standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty: He judgeth among the Gods.

THE Actions of men eminent in Place and Power, are of much greater Importance than what's done by inferiour Persons. The Greater Stars give the clearer Light, and have the stronger Influence. The Good or Hurt of many, the Welfare or Infelicity of Thousands, oft de-

pends upon the Actions of some few *Great men*. Their more notable Miscarriages oft prove Epidemicall Mischiefs; whereas by their wise Management of great Affairs, men enjoy much Tranquillity, with *Abundance* of the Blessings *of Peace*. Now nothing does more conduce to engage such Persons to a serious Care in the menage of important Matters than a lively Sense of the Divine Presence. For as *mean men* are mightily over-aw'd by the Presence of a King, and so easily restrain'd from an indecent Rudeness, and induc't to a civil Behaviour, and good Government of themselves: so must *Great men*, in all Reason, be powerfully influenc't by the Presence of the most high God, who is infinitely more above them in Wisdom, Greatness, Power, than the Greatest King above the meanest men. Nothing therefore can be more proper and powerful to induce Judges and Magistrates to a due Execution of their Office, when they are assembled in a Court of Justice, than a clear Apprehension, a firm Persuasion, and a full Assurance that Almighty GOD, the Great Judge of the World, is present with them as Judge and King. And nothing is more certain. For, saith the Word of Truth, *God standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty: He judgeth among the Gods.*

Now who are *the Mighty*, *the Gods* here mention'd, but *Judges and Magistrates?* What is this *Congregation of the Mighty*, but a *Court of Justice?* And who is this *Glorious Person*, who stands in the Court, and superintends in Judgment: 'Tis GOD Himself. *GOD standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty: He judgeth among the Gods.*

Here then we have a fair Prospect into a large Field of Discourse. Let's here make a little Stand, and take a distinct View of the more remarkable Things, which present themselves to our Eye. And lets in the first

Place

Place view those *Great and Splendid Titles*, which are here given to Judges and Magistrates, and consider the Import and Reason of them. Then let's cast our Eye upon the *Court*, where the Persons adorn'd and dignify'd with these Titles are assembled, and consider the Reason of their Convention and Association: And lastly let's take special Notice of that *bright Glory* that rests upon them, which results from the *Divine Presence* among them, and consider what Influence this should have upon their Actions and Attendants, and especially those who have any particular Concern in the Court.

The *Titles* here given to Judges and Magistrates are very illustrious: they are call'd אל EL and אלהים ELOHIM, *the Mighty, the Gods*, or the Mighty Gods. Both these Titles are the *Names of GOD*, even of the most High GOD, by which He is most usually call'd in the Holy Scripture. They both signify *Might and Power*, with a special Reference to *Justice and Judgment*. For אלהים ELOHIM (as the *Hebrews* observe) is a *Name of Judgment*; as יהוה JEHOVAH is a *Name of Grace*. So it's said שפט אלהים ELOHIM SHOPHET, *GOD is Judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another*. Psal. 75. 7. And by this Name are Judges call'd in the Law of *Moses*. For it is said, *For all manner of Trespass, whether it be for Ox, for Ass, for Sheep, for Raiment, or for any manner of lost Thing, which another challengeth to be his, the Cause of both Parties shall come* עד האלהים AD HAELOHIM, *before the Judges; and whom* אלהים ELOHIM *the Judges shall condemn, he shall pay double unto his Neighbour*. Exo. 22. 9. And so likewise is the Name אל EL given to GOD when He is spoken of as a just and impartial Judge. *For the LORD your GOD* (saies *Moses* to Israel) *is GOD of Gods, and LORD of Lords,* האל הגדל HAEL HAGGADOL, *a Great GOD, a mighty* Deut. 10. 17, 18.

ty and a terrible, which regardeth not Persons, nor taketh Reward. He doth execute the Judgment of the Fatherless and the Widow. And therefore saith *Bildad* in *Job*,

Job, 8. 3. תאר יעות משפט *Doth* EL, *GOD pervert Judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert Justice?*

Strength and Power for Judgment then is the Import of these Names which are here given to Judges. And therefore, when GOD is represented as coming forth in his terrible Majesty, with Power and great Glory, to judge the whole World in Righteousness, both these Names are given to Him. For it's said,

Psal. 50. 1–6. אל אלהים EL ELOHIM, *The Mighty GOD, even the LORD hath spoken, and called the Earth, even from the rising of the Sun, unto the going down thereof. Out of Zion the Perfection of Beauty* אלהים הופיע *GOD, even* ELOHIM *the Mighty GOD, hath shined.* יבא אלהינו *Our GOD, even* ELOHIM *the Mighty Judge shall come, and shall not keep Silence. A Fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him. He shall call to the Heavens from above, and to the Earth that He may judge His People. Gather my Saints together unto me, those who have made a Covenant with me by Sacrifice. And the Heavens shall declare his Righteousness:* כי־אלהים שפט הוא *For GOD,* ELOHIM, *the Mighty GOD, He is Judge*; or (as we render it) *GOD is Judge Himself.*

Thus we have seen the *Import* of the Names or Titles here given to Judges and Magistrates: let's now consider for what *Reason* they are given to them.

They are certainly given them *Honoris & Officii gratiâ*, to put an *Honour* upon them, to discriminate them from others of an inferiour Rank and Order in the World; and to oblige them to such an Execution of their *Office*, as becomes them who are dignify'd with so great an Honour.

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'Tis sure no small Honour to Judges and Magistrates, that GOD hath intrusted them with the *Balances of Justice*, arm'd them with his own *glittering Sword*, and put into their Hands his *Thunder and Lightening*, even the Terrours of the Law, which may make them formidable to guilty men: but this Honour receives a mighty Augmentation by this, that he hath graciously bene pleas'd to communicate to them His *own Names*, which primarily and most properly pertain unto Himself; even אל EL, and אלהים ELOHIM, in that they are call'd the *Mighty*, stiled *Gods*. What greater Glory could GOD put upon men? When GOD, as a Token of his Favour, chang'd the Names of *Abram* and *Sarai*, as a *Mark of Honour*, He added only to each of them one Letter of his own glorious Name, יהוה JEHOVAH, calling him *ABRAHAM*, and her *SARAH*. Gen. 17. 5, 15. But behold here, not a Letter of any Name of GOD, but his very *Name*, אל EL, GOD, the Mighty GOD, is here given to Judges and Magistrates. Yea, the very same Name, which GOD, upon the Account of His Power and Judgment, assumes to Himself, He here gives unto them. For it's here said, אלהים ELOHIM, *GOD standeth in the Congregation of* אל EL, *the Mighty: He judges among* אלהים ELOHIM, *the Gods*. What more magnificent can be spoken of them? And the Greatness of Him that speaks it, makes the Glory greater to them. If the King give a *Title of Honour* to a man, it remains with him, and puts a Lustre upon his Person: If GOD Himself give a *Title of Honour* to a man, it makes him truly honourable. And tho' the King gives many Titles of Honour to his Subjects, He reserves that of King to himself: this is a *Glory* which he will *not give to another*. But behold here GOD gives the Title of *Gods* to men. In confer-

ring of Honour, the King makes not men *Kings*: but GOD makes men *Gods*. Such are Judges and Magi-
Psal. 82. 6. strates in the Sacred Style; *I have said, Ye are Gods.* Such is the Honour of those Persons, whom *the King of Kings delights to Honour.* The Senate of *Rome*
Plut. in Pyrrhus. seem'd to *Cineas* (Ambassadour of King *Pyrrhus*) a *Council-House of Kings*: but a Court of Justice, where the Mighty are assembled for Judgment, is a *Congregation of Gods.*

Now GOD puts this Honour upon Judges and Magistrates, because they are to *represent his Person* in the Execution of their Office; and to procure them the greater *Reverence and Veneration* from men, that the Majesty of Justice, which is design'd to over-awe men to Obedience, may not be obscur'd by the Contempt of the Persons, who are authoriz'd for the Administration of it. And when men give Honour to a Magistrate, to a Judge, as GOD's Representative, they do in effect give Glory to GOD, who hath given such Power and Authority to men. And thus there is, and ought to be, a constant *Circulation of Honour*; which as it Originally comes from GOD, so should it ultimately return to
Rev. 22. 13. Him, who is *the First and the Last, the Beginning and the Ending*; the first Cause, and last End of all things. All the *Streams* of Excellency and Honour, which flow from Him as their first *Fountain* and Originall, should return to Him, and empty themselves into the immense *Ocean* of His Glory.

Now as GOD by giving these Names to Judges and Magistrates, puts a Lustre upon their Persons, and incircles them with a Glory, to secure them from Contempt: so He mightily obliges them hereby to such a *Discharge of their Duty*, as that there may be a visible

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Correspondency in their Actions to the Excellency of their Titles; and the Lustre and Glory of these Great Names, may shine forth in the Execution of their Office. Those who are stiled Gods, should excell in those *Virtues*, which are the lively Images of the Divine Perfections, even of those Excellencies which are the Glories of God, as the Supreme Lord and Judge of the World. Such are *Wisdom*, *Justice*, *Mercy*, *Fortitude and Truth*. These are as the bright Raies of the Sun wherein the eternal Divinity shines forth with an amiable Lustre, in the Government of the World. And the Gods on Earth should array themselves with these Beams and Beauties: and that they may manifest themselves to be what they are call'd, they should so demean themselves that these *Virtues and Excellencies* may appear in their Administrations.

Wisdom is a Virtue which should never be wanting in Judges and Magistrates. 'Twas the *Wisdom of Solomon* which made his *Face to shine* with so bright a Lustre, when he sate κύδει γαίων, glittering in his Glory and Majesty upon the Tribunal. In his clear Decision of the doubtful Case betwixt the *two Harlots*, both pleading for one living Child, all the World admir'd his Wisdom. This was an early Glory of his Government, which render'd him truly Great in the Eyes of his Subjects. Wisdom in a King or a Judge is an *Angelicall Excellency*, a Ray of Divinity. So it was said of *David*; *As an Angel of GOD, so is my Lord the King, to discern good and bad.* This discerning Faculty is a necessary Virtue in a Judge or Magistrate, without which he cannot rightly administer Justice and Judgment *. He must have a *piercing Eye* to look through the *Disguises* wherewith guilty men are wont to hide the Truth, and palliate their Crimes. Truth is oft hud-

Eccles. 8. 1.

1 Kin. 3. 28.

2 Sam. 14. 17.

* Χρὴ τὸς τῶν πραγμάτων κριτὰς ὀξυτάτης εἶναι περὶ τὸ νοεῖν. Isid. Pelus. l. 3. Ep. 9.

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led up in Darkneſs, and hidden from the Eyes of men. A ſtrict Scrutiny is then neceſſary to a right Judgment. This was the Practice of *Patient Job* in his Proſperous
Job 29. 16. State; *The Cauſe which I knew not, I ſearched out.*

Political Wiſdom, which ſtands in the Knowledge of Laws, and an Ability to apply that Knowledge to Practice, in all emergent Caſes, and to make a right Judgment of Things in various Circumſtances, is a Virtue without which it is not imaginable the Office of a Judge or Magiſtrate ſhould be rightly executed.
Plato. For as Juſtice is ἕρμα πόλεων, *the prop of Cities*, the ſtrength of Societies, the Support of Kingdoms: ſo
Orpheus. Wiſdom is ὄμμα δίκης, the *Eye of Juſtice*. Without this, Juſtice is blind; and that Sword oft wounds the Innocent which ſhould Defend them, and ſlay the Guilty.

But *Juſtice* thus guided by Wiſdom, is an eſſential Excellency of a Good Ruler, a God-like Judge. For,
2 Sam. 23. 3. *He that ruleth over men muſt be juſt, ruling in the Fear of GOD.* And 'tis impartiall Juſtice, which *Moſes* the Great Law-giver requires in Judges, in *the Charge*
Deut. 1. 16, 17. which he gave them, ſaying, *Hear the Cauſes between your Brethren, and judge righteouſly between every man, and his Brother and the Stranger that is with him. Ye ſhall not reſpect Perſons in Judgment; but ye ſhall hear the ſmall as well as the Great: ye ſhall not be afraid of the Face of man; for the Judgment is GOD's.* For when Judges proceed according to the Divine Law, which is the moſt exact *Rule of Juſtice*, the Sentence they pronounce, either when they abſolve the Innocent, or condemn the Guilty, is none other than that which GOD Himſelf, the Supreme Judge, hath already pronounc't in his Law.

A Judge therefore making the Divine Law his Rule in Judgment, muſt not acquit the Guilty, nor condemn
Prov. 17. 15. the Righteous. For *he that juſtifieth the wicked, and he*

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that condemneth the just, even they both are an Abomination to the LORD. And he that either for *Fear* or *Favour* acquits a Great Offendour, shall not only be hated of God, but also abhorr'd of men. For, *He that saith to the Wicked, Thou art Righteous; him shall the people curse, Nations shall abhor him.* He that against the Light of his own Conscience, either acquits the Guilty, or condemns the Innocent, draws a woful Guilt upon his own Soul; the Guilt of the Crime committed, or the Bloud shed; and GOD will require it at his Hand. Prov. 24. 23, 24.

Justice is the Glory of the King, and therefore should be the Care of the Judge. When *Sisamnes*, one of the chiefest of the *Persian* Judges, had given an unjust Judgment, *Cambyses* the King caused him to be flay'd alive, and his Skin (as a bloudy Trophee of the Triumph of Justice over an unjust Judge) to be hung up over the Judgment-Seat, for a Warning to all others. *Herod. l. 5.*

Judges stand in the stead of GOD; and therefore they should depose all Humane Respects, and as *Divine Persons*, do what may be rationally conceiv'd GOD Himself, who is essentially Just, in the like Case would do. A Judge should so act in all Administrations, as if he was nothing else but *Justice incarnate.* So exactly, impartially Just should Judges be, as if they were (what St. *Paul and Barnabas* were thought to be) *Gods come down from Heaven in the Likeness of men.* And therefore they must be such whose Eyes are not dazled with the Lustre of Gold, nor Hands open'd to receive Gifts. For how absurd is it that (as it is in the ancient Proverb *) The *Hare* should draw the *Lyon* with a golden Snare! *Judges and Officers* (saies *Moses*) *shalt thou make thee in all thy Gates, which the* LORD *thy* GOD *giveth thee throughout all thy Tribes: and they shall judge the People with just Judgment. Thou shalt not wrest Judg-* Acts 14. 11.

* Ἕλκει λαγὼς λέοντα χρυσέῳ βρόχῳ. Deut. 16. 18, 19, 20.

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ment, thou ſhalt not reſpect Perſons, neither take a Gift: for a Gift doth blind the Eyes of the Wiſe, and pervert the Words of the Righteous. **Juſtice, Juſtice,* or, *that which is altogether juſt ſhalt thou follow.* It ſhould be as eaſy to turn the Sun from his Courſe, as to divert a Judge from the Courſe of Juſtice.

* צדק צדק תרדף

And yet muſt a Judge or Magiſtrate ſo do Juſtice, as not to forget ſeaſonably to ſhew *Mercy*, when fit occaſion is offer'd. For Mercy is another Glory of the Divinity, wherein thoſe who are Gods on Earth, ſhould ſhine in the Eyes of men. For the moſt High GOD, tho' infinitely Juſt, is yet very Merciful and Gracious. *Thy Mercy* (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) *is Great unto the Heavens*; and *the Earth is full of Thy Mercy.* Mercy is the moſt amiable Excellency of that GOD who is terrible in Majeſty, and reſiſtleſs in His Power. Mercy, 'tis the Beauty of His Face, the Sweetneſs of His Name, the Glory of His Crown, the Joy (if I may ſo ſpeak) and Delight of His Heart. *Who is a GOD like unto Thee* (ſaith the Prophet) *who pardoneth Iniquity, and paſſeth by the Tranſgreſſion of the Remnant of His Heritage? He retaineth not His Anger for ever; becauſe He delighteth in Mercy.* There is not then a more lovely Image of God to be found upon Earth, than a Merciful man. Juſtice without Mercy, will in ſome Caſes, be *Cruelty*; and Government without this excellent Virtue, will degenerate into *Tyranny.* In a well govern'd Kingdom, *Judgment ſhould run down as Water, and Righteouſneſs as a mighty Stream.* But without Mercy, *Judgment will be turn'd to Wormwood,* and thoſe mighty Waters, as the Rivers of *Egypt*, will be turn'd into *Bloud.* Juſtice and Mercy muſt walk hand in hand, in the Paths of Equity and Judgment. The Good Judge muſt condemn the Guilty, and ſo do Juſtice: but defend the

Pſal. 57. 10. & 119. 64.

Mic. 7. 18.

Am. 5. 24.

Am. 5. 7.

Inno-

Innocent, out of Love to Mercy. Such is the Charge which GOD by the Psalmist gives unto Judges and Magistrates; *Defend the Poor and Fatherless: do Justice to the afflicted and needy; rid them out of the hand of the Wicked.* Thus Justice on the Guilty, is Mercy to the Innocent. Psal. 82. 3, 4.

Moreover a *Love to Mercy* should be manifested by alleviating the *Rigours of Justice*, according to the Quality of the Offence, and condition of the Offendour, so far as it may be done within the Latitude of the Law. Thus *Zaleucus*, the Law-giver of the *Locrians*, when his Son being taken in Adultery, was by the Law to suffer the Lois of both his Eyes, did by a rare Act of Mercy alleviate the Rigour of Justice, in suffering one of his own Eyes to be put out, and sparing one of his Sons, that he might not utterly deprive him of his Sight. Ælian. var. Hist. l. 13. c. 24.

The Sword of Justice is to be bathed in the Oyle of Mercy, that it may at once wound and heal. For the very Design of Justice, even in the severest Punishments, is not the Destruction, but the Good and Welfare of Mankind; according to the known Maxim, Πᾶσα τιμωρία ἕνεκα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, *all Punishment is design'd for Good.* It's then the Property of a good Judge not to be transported by his Passion to Acts of Severity in the Administration of Judgment, but (after the Example of GOD Himself) *in Wrath to remember Mercy.* Mercy in the Administration of Justice, fixes the Empire of a Prince in the Hearts of his Subjects, which is the firmest Establishment, and so the best Security for the Kingdoms Peace. For by Justice *the Oppressours are consumed out of the Land: and in Mercy* (saith the Princely Prophet) *shall the Throne be established.* Thus Mercy, the Beauty of the Divine Government, is the strength and Glory of a Kingdom. Hab. 3. 2. Isa. 16. 5.

But tho' the Heart of a Ruler or Judge be tender, and apt to melt into Mercy, yet must he be *strong and resolute* in the Administration of Justice. *The* LORD *reigneth* (saith the Psalmist) *He is clothed with Majesty; the* LORD *is clothed with strength, wherewith He hath girded Himself.* He's a Strong GOD who governs and judges the World; and that man must be Strong and of good Courage, who stands in GOD's stead for the Administration of Government and Justice. When a just Cause meets with a strong Opposition, there should the Judge interpose his Power for the Defence of Right, and by his Authority become a Bulwark to the Innocent. A Judge should never want Courage to rebuke the proudest Patron of Wrong, the boldest Enemy to Justice.

Psal. 93. 1.

Fortitude is a Virtue necessary in a Judge or Magistrate: and Justice then shines with the brightest Lustre, when it is in Conjunction with Fortitude. There are two great Evils which oft obstruct Justice, *Force* and *Fraud*. Fraud is a secret, Force an open Enemy: Now as great *Wisdom* is necessary in a Judge to detect Fraud; so great *Fortitude* is no less necessary to repell Force. *Solomons* Throne of Judgment was guarded with Lyons. Justice must not only be guided by Wisdom, but also guarded by Strength, maintain'd by Courage.

1 Kin. 10. 18, 19, 20.

He that sustains the Person of GOD, must not fear the Faces of men. He must not be baffled by a bold Offendour, so as to suffer a potent Transgressour of the Law, to carry out his Crimes with Impunity; nor must he be over-born by the complicated Force of a multitude of Offendours. He must act as becomes one who has Almighty GOD for his Patron, who accounts impartial Justice his impenetrable Shield, who designs

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the Publick Good as his main End, and eſteems the faithful Diſcharge of his Duty, to be his chiefeſt Glory. And therefore in the Direction given to *Moſes* for the Choice and Conſtitution of Magiſtrates and Judges over the people, it is ſaid, *Thou ſhalt provide out of all the people, Able men,* אנשי חיל *men of Virtue and Valour, of Courage and Strength,* as the prime Requiſite for the adapting of Perſons for this great Office. And therefore ſaid *Jehoſhaphat* to the Judges, whom he appointed to judge the people, חזקו ועשו *Be Strong and Do your Work,* or, as we render it, *Deal couragiouſly, and the LORD ſhall be with the Good.* Exod. 18. 21. 2 Chron. 19. 11.

And why are Judges and Magiſtrates here, (in the Text) call'd *the Mighty,* yea, אלהים ELOHIM, *the Mighty GOD,* but to ſignify they ought to be men of Might and Courage, for the Adminiſtration of Juſtice and Judgment: for the reſtraining of daring Crimes, and the Puniſhment of proud and potent Offendours?

A good Judge or Magiſtrate who is faithfull in the Diſcharge of his Duty, need not doubt the Divine Preſence and Protection. If a Matter of ſpecial Difficulty, which is attended with Danger, do occur, he may do well to call to mind the Words of *David* to his Son *Solomon*; *Be ſtrong, and of good Courage, and do it; Fear not, nor be diſmai'd: for the LORD GOD, even my GOD will be with thee; He will not fail thee, nor forſake thee.* Juſtice and Judgment is *GOD's Work:* and therefore he that ſtands in GOD's ſtead, ſhould not, for Fear of man, decline the doing of it. 1 Chron. 28. 20.

The *Thebans* were wont to make the Statues of their Judges *without Hands*; to note they ſhould take no Bribes: but he cannot poſſibly be a good Judge, who (as it is ſaid of the *Sword-Fiſh*) is *without Heart*; who wants Courage and Reſolution to Execute Juſtice and *Plut. de Iſid. & Oſir.*

Judgment. A Judge must have an *Eagles Eye*, and a *Lyons Heart*: He must have a Quickness of Sight to detect mens Crimes, and a Courage sufficient to condemn the Guilty:

Sir *Rich. Baker.* We read in our Chronicle, that *Henry* the Fifth being Prince, coming to rescue one of his Servants that was indicted, was resisted by the Lord Chief Justice, whom he struck in the Face; for which the Lord Chief Justice committed him to the *Fleet*. The Prince suffer'd himself to be led to Prison. The King his Father hearing of it, was exceedingly pleased, that he had *a Judge of such Courage, and a Son of such Submission.*

Justice is indeed a *Heroicall Virtue* in a Judge, which elevates him above all Fears of Danger and Degradation, all Regard to Riches and Honours, all Respects to Relations and Allies; it raises him to a true Greatness of Mind, and Sublimity of Spirit, and sets him above all Terrours and Temptations; it assimilates him in his Judiciall Proceedings to the impassible Divinity. And such a Judge shines in Honour as a *God* among men; and in the Renown of his Justice, will be *immortall.*

Thus *Fortitude and Magnanimity* must enoble the Minds of those who sit upon the Tribunall, and elevate their Spirits to such an *Heroicall Height* as is proportionable to the Greatness of the Power wherewith they are intrusted, for the Administration of Justice and Judgment.

Exo. 18. 21. To complete their Character and Conformity to GOD, Judges and Magistrates must be אנשי חיל *men of Truth.* *Truth* is an essential Excellency of GOD, Deut. 32. 4. the Rector and Judge of the World. For *a GOD of Truth, and without Iniquity, Just and Right is He.* The Truth of Things is their *Reality*, or reall Existence as

as they are represented to be: the Truth of Persons is their *Integrity*, or faithful Management of their Affairs, in Answer to and Discharge of their Obligations. A Judge or Magistrate must be *Faithfull* in the Discharge of his Trust, and make Truth, as far as it can be discern'd, the very *Basis* of all his Proceedings.

Among the *Egyptians* the chief Judge wore about his Neck a certain Jewel, wherein the *Image of Truth* was ingraven in a precious Stone. This was design'd certainly not so much for an *Ornament*, as a *Memoriall*; that he might proceed in Judgment according to Truth. And surely *RIGHTEOUSNESS and TRUTH* (as the *URIM and THUMMIM* in the Breast-plate of *Aaron*) should be engraven on the Soul of the Judge. For he that has not Truth and Justice *seated in his very Soul* (as the Father speaks *) cannot rightly execute Judgment.

Ælian. var. Hist. l. 14. c. 34.

Exo. 28. 30.

* Ὁ τὴν ἀληθῆ δικαιοσύνην μὴ ἔχων προεναποκειμένην αὐτοῦ τῇ ψυχῇ, — τὸ κρῖμα κατεθνώσιν οὐ δύναται. Basil.

Truth is the *Soul of Justice*, without which Courts of Judicature are but *Shops of Cruelty*. *If a Ruler hearken to Lyes* (saith *Solomon*) *all his Servants are wicked*. Then the Righteous will be defam'd, the Guilty absolv'd, the Innocent condemn'd; Justice and Judgment will be perverted to the high Dishonour of GOD, and horrid Oppression of men: but when the Ruler and Judge (with *David*) *hates and abhors Lying*, loves the Truth, preserves it inviolable in himself, and prizes it in other men, he will earnestly endeavour to find out Truth in all Matters before him, that all his Proceedings may be in Righteousness and Truth. Happy is the State of that Land, wherein *Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other*. When Truth shines with a clear Ray, Justice will appear in a conspicuous Glory.

Prov. 29. 12.
Psal. 119. 163.

Psal. 85. 1.

Thus

Thus we have seen what the *Virtues* are wherein Judges and Magistrates are oblig'd to excell, upon Account of that *Honour* which the most High GOD hath conferr'd upon them, in giving such Glorious Titles to them. They are stil'd *the Mighty*, *the Gods*; and therefore that they may express a Similitude to the Eternal Divinitie, they ought to excel in *Wisdom*, *Justice*, *Mercy*, *Fortitude and Truth*. Then as their Names are a *Titular Honour*, these Virtues will be their *Reall Glory*. These Virtues will not only gild their Names, but put such a Lustre upon their Persons, as will make them appear as Gods among men. Where-ever they live, they will be had in Honour; especially when these *judiciary Virtues* are conjoin'd with a constant *Practice of true Pietie*, attended with the Actions of a *good Life*, and animated with a *great Zeal* for the Glory of GOD. And truly he that is GOD's Substitute, authoriz'd to act his Part among men, should be zealous for His Glory: and he that by the Hand of GOD is exalted to Eminency of Place and Power above others, should excell in Piety, and be exemplary to others in the Virtues and Actions of a good Life. He should live above this World, in Contempt of sordid Gain and secular Glory, and uncontaminated with those sensuall Pleasures, and vicious Impurities, which wofully debase the Minds of men. A corrupt Judge, that oppresses the Poor, is stil'd *a man of the Earth*, אנוש מן־הארץ, *a sorry man, who is but a Son of the Earth*. But as for *the Mighty*, who are called *Gods*, *and all of them Sons of the most High*, how does it become them to *mind the Things that are above*, and to have their *Conversation in Heaven*, from whence their Power and Glory descends! For where should a God live but in Heaven? And if, for the Good of men, he abide on Earth, he should by a Great Virtue, turn Earth into Heaven, and the Place

Psal 10.18.

Psal. 82. 1, 6.

Col. 3. 2, 20.

Place wherein he moves and acts, in to a Sphære of Glory.

Such ought Magiſtrates and Judges, who are the *living Images of GOD*, to be in this World. And then the more they excell in Virtue and Piety here, the brighter ſhall they ſhine in Glory hereafter.

For they muſt at length leave this World, and be diveſted of their ſecular Power and Greatneſs. Tho' *Titular Gods*, they are indeed but *Mortall men. I have ſaid ye are Gods, and all of you Children of the moſt High: but ye ſhall dye like men, and fall like one of the Princes.* You, who ſit as Gods upon the Tribunall in this World, and judge others, ſhall at length (how ſoon ye know not) ſtand before the Tribunall of the moſt High GOD, to be judg'd your ſelves, according to your Works. Then ſhall all the Actions of *Humane Courts* be ſcann'd again, and all the Errours and Obliquities of Judiciall Proceedings openly detected. Then the *Wrongs* of all the oppreſſed, of all that have been injur'd by an unjuſt Sentence, the *Tears of Orphans*, and the *Bloud of Innocents*, ſhall with loud Clamours, cry for Juſtice, and ſollicit the Divine Vengeance againſt the Guilty. Then ſhall a ſevere Sentence, a dreadfull Doom be paſs'd upon all corrupt Magiſtrates and unjuſt Judges. The Sentence ſhall be irrevocable, the Judgment inevitable, the Puniſhment intolerable and everlaſting. But good Magiſtrates and juſt Judges ſhall, at that Day, appear with great Joy; and as they have bene exalted above others in the Honour of their Places here, ſo ſhall they out-ſhine them in the Luſtre of their Perſons, and have thoſe Eminent Services they have done for GOD, for their King, for their Country, rewarded with a ſuper-excellent Glory in Hea-

Pſal. 82, 6, 7.

ven.

Psal. 97. 7. ven. Angels are ſtiled אלהים ELOHIM, *Gods* (as it is ſaid, *Worſhip Him all ye Gods*) and Judges who are called *Gods* on Earth, having faithfully diſcharg'd their Duty, ſhall ſhare in the Glory of Angels, and ſhine as Gods in Heaven for ever and ever.

Such is the Honour, ſuch ſhall be the Glory of good Magiſtrates, of juſt Judges. But now Magiſtrates and Judges are either *Supreme or ſubordinate*. The Supreme Magiſtrate and Judge in a Kingdom is the
1 Pet. 2. 13, 14. KING Himſelf, as it is ſaid; *Submit your ſelves to every Ordinance of man for the* LORD's *ſake, whether it be to the King, as Supreme; or unto Governours, as unto them that are ſent by him, for the Puniſhment of evil-Doers, and the Praiſe of them that do well*; that is, ſubordinate Judges and Magiſtrates. Judges and Magiſtrates then are but as *Delegates of the King*, who as his Repreſentatives, ſuſtain his Perſon in Acts of Government and Adminiſtration of Juſtice to the People. The Honour of theſe th n in being ſtiled *the Mighty, the Gods*, is but a reflected Ray of that Glory, which with a far brighter Luſtre ſhines in Him. The King does primarily and immediately repreſent the Perſon of GOD; and Judges and Magiſtrates ſecondarily and mediately, as they repreſent the Perſon of the King. The Glory then of theſe Great Names, *the Mighty, the Gods*, does primarily pertain to Sovereign Princes; as may plainly appear by the Words of the Scripture, where
Pſal. 82. 6, 7. they are ſo ſtiled; *I have ſaid, Ye are Gods, and all of you Children of the moſt High: but ye ſhall dye like men, and fall like one of the Princes*; like *David*, *Solomon*, *Hezekiah*, that ſometimes ſhone in this Glory, and now are fallen into the Duſt. Yea, and in our *Publick Service*, we thus read the Words of the Text; *GOD ſtandeth in the Congregation of Princes: He is Judge among Gods.*

So

So that the *Gods* here mention'd (according to this Reading of the Words) are *Princes*: and what Princes can so properly be stiled *Gods* as Kings, who have a Sovereign Power over the People?

The Glory and Majesty of GOD then shines in its brightest Lustre in the Face of the King. *His Glory is great* (saith the Psalmist) *in thy Salvation: Honour and Majesty hast thou laid upon him.* 'Tis the King then who by reason of his Supereminency in Power and Authority is indeed אל EL, אלהים ELOHIM, *a Mighty God*, ruling and judging amongst men. 'Tis the King who (as *Joseph* to *Pharaoh*, *Daniel* to *Darius*) is a Ruler and a Judge next and immediately under the most High GOD, the Supreme LORD and Judge of the whole World. With what Reverence and Veneration then ought men to look upon his Person! With what Readiness and Alacrity ought they to submit to his Rule and Government! Hereby also we may plainly perceive how great the Sin of *Disobedience* is, how heinous the Crime of *Rebellion*. 'Tis in Effect to contemn GOD, *to fight against GOD*, who visibly governs the World by Sovereign Princes, as his Substitutes and Vicegerents. And upon the same Account, how great is the Sin of *speaking Evil* of the King! How monstrous the Crime of making a *murderous Attempt* against his Sacred Person! 'Tis said in the Law, *Thou shalt not revile the Gods*, אלהים ELOHIM, *the Judges* (much less *the King*;) *nor curse* נשיא NASI, *the Prince, or Ruler of the People*. The speaking Evil of an ordinary Person, is a *Reproach*; of a King, 'tis as the speaking Evil of GOD, a *Blasphemy*. The Charge drawn up against *Naboth* was this; *Naboth did blaspheme GOD and the King*. With this Crime the bold and daring *Sectaries* of the Primitive Times, the proud and impure *Gnosticks*, are charg'd by the Apostles themselves,

Psal. 21. 5.

Acts 5. 39.

Exo. 22. 28.

1 Kin. 21. 13.

2 Pet. 2. 10. Jude, v. 8. by whom they are thus characteriz'd; *They despise Government and Dominion, presumptuous are they and self-will'd; they are not afraid to speak evil of Dignities,* δόξας δ᾽ οὐ τρέμουσι βλασφημοῦντες, *they tremble not when they blaspheme the Glories*; Sovereign Princes, in whom the Majesty and Glory of GOD shines, and who therefore, as *Gods* among men, are *the Glories* of Mankind. When GOD has put so much Majesty and Glory on them, given so much Authority and Power to them, on purpose to cast an Awe upon those who are to be subject to them, it must needs be strange that men should arrive to such an Height of Insolence, as not to *tremble* when they *blaspheme* them. But desperate is the Boldness of Wicked men; especially when a Multitude of them is combined in a *Traiterous Conspiracy* against the Life and Honour of their lawfull Sovereign. Of such, *David*, one of the best of Kings, complains; *I have heard the Blasphemy of the Multitude: and Fear is on every side while they conspire together against me, and take their Counsel to take away my Life.* Audacious Villany! Desperate Impiety! How horrible a Wickedness is a bloudy Attempt against the Life of the King! Surely as the Speaking Evil of a King *is Blasphemy*, so the Killing of a King is the *Murder of GOD in Effigie*, and the Slaughter of a whole Kingdom at a Stroke. For *the Anointed of the LORD is the Breath of our Nostrills.* Our Lives are in a sort bound up in the Life of our Sovereign Lord the King; seeing under his Government and Protection we draw our *vitall Breath.* How equall and reasonable is it, that we should not only earnestly pray to Almighty GOD for the Preservation of the Person of the King from *Deceit and Violence*; but also, with the Hazard of our Lives and Estates, endeavour to do what lies in us, for his Defence and Security: seeing we owe our own Peace and Safety, our Lives and

Psal. 31. 13. *Old Translation.*

Lam. 4. 20.

Psal. 72. 14.

and Liberties, with the quiet and comfortable Fruition of all our Priviledges and Possessions, to his *Sword and Scepter*. And be we well assured, the hearty Loyalty and Obedience of the Subjects, is the best Security for the Life of the King, and the greatest Glory of his Kingdom.

Having pay'd this small *Tribute*, which the Words of the Text demand, to *the King as Supreme*, return we to the subordinate Rulers and Judges. And having considered them in their *Personall Capacity*, both as to the Dignity which is put upon them, and the Duty which is required of them; Come we now to consider them in their *Publick Appearance*, as assembled in a *Court of Jud cature*, for the Administration of Justice and Judgment. This is here call'd עדת־אל ADATH-EL, *GOD's Court or Council*; as a Court of Judicature may be fitly call'd; because constituted by his Authority, and held by his Appointment, as the *Author* and Originall of all *Order*, *Power*, *and Government*; and be- 1 Cor. 14. 33. Rom. 13. 1. cause He is therein present, as Supreme Lord and Judge: For *GOD standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty* (as we read it) or, *in the Court of GOD*; that is (according to the Idiom and Propriety of the *Hebrew-Tongue*) *in His own Court: He judges among the Gods*. But עדת־אל ADATH-EL, is here rendred by the *LXX*. συναγωγὴ θεῶν, *the Synagogue, the Assembly of the Gods*; which is of the same Import with our Version, *the Congregation of the Mighty*. Now these Mighty ones, are the Judge or Judges, with other Magistrates and Officers authoriz'd for the Administration and Execution of Justice and Judgment, for the Conservation of the Publick Peace.

Now this *Convention and Association* of the Mighty, of Judges and Magistrates, for the Consti ution of a *Court of Justice*, is grounded upon g eat Reason. For

hereby the Administration of Justice is not only render'd more unexceptionable, but also more powerful and effectually conducible to its proper End, which is the *Publick Peace*, the Peoples Good. This will plainly appear, if we consider, that the great End of the Administration of Justice, is the keeping of people within the Limits of those Laws, which are the Rules of Government: And Government is design'd for the *Publick Good*; and Laws are made for the securing of the *Persons and Proprieties* of the People; and especially of the King or Supreme Governour, who is the *Life of the Law*, and *Soul of Government*, from whom that quickening Influence is derived, which animates the Law, otherwise a *dead Letter*, into a *living Power*. And so consequently the Safety and Happiness of all the People, must necessarily depend upon the Safety and Prosperity of the King. Now Laws are design'd to be as a *Fence and Shield* to men: a *Shield* to secure their *Persons* from Wrong by Deceit or Violence; a *Fence*, to secure their *Proprieties* from any injurious Encroachment or Invasion by others. For the rendring them more effectuall for this End, *Penalties* are annext unto them, in the Infliction whereof upon Transgressours stands the *Execution of the Laws*. This Execution of Laws is properly an Act of Justice, without which Laws become insignificant, as being ineffectuall for the Restraint of men from those Insolencies and Exorbitancies, whereby they become injurious to others, and Disturbers of the Publick Peace. Now *Courts of Judicature* are design'd for the *Execution of Laws*, in the due Administration of Justice and Judgment. And the *Convention of many Persons*, authoriz'd by the *Sovereign Power* for this End, cannot but rationally appear to be the most powerfull and effectual Means, to restrain

strain men from Vice and Sin, to keep them within the Limits of the Law, and so to promote the great End of Government, the *Publick Good*, the Kingdoms Peace.

For in such an Assembly of Judges and Magistrates, such a *Congregation of the Mighty*, such a Convention of the Gods, all completely arm'd with Authority and Power for the Execution of Justice and Judgment, there must needs appear so much *Majesty*, as will cast an Awe upon the Spirits of men, strike the Guilty with such a Terrour, as may well make them tremble at the Bar, and create such a Fear of offending in the Hearts of the innocent, as may in all Reason restrain them from the Commission of those Crimes, for which they see others condemn'd by the Sentence of the Judge, and then punisht by the Hands of the Executioner. For *the Magistrate bears not the Sword in vain: for he is the Minister of* GOD, *a Revenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth evil.* Rom. 13. 4.

Now when the *Laws* are backt by *Arms:* and many Persons are assembled together bearing the *Ensigns of Authority*, and are attended by others bearing the *Instruments of Justice*, we may reasonably conceive this will strike such a Terrour into the Minds of men, and cast such an Awe upon those that are ill-inclin'd, as to restrain them from injurious Exorbitancies, and keep them within the Bounds of Law and Government. This *accumulated Strength* of Justice will as a *mighty Torrent* bear down all Opposition, and receive no Check by the Insolence of a bold Offendour, nor be obstructed by a Multitude of Transgressours. Thus Justice in a *Collective Body* of Judges, will shine with brighter Ma-

Majesty, and strike with greater strength, towards the beating down all the *Monsters* of rebellious Pride, and enormous Power, which shall dare to rise up against Law and Government.

Many Eyes see clearer than one, and many Hands do with greater Force, repell that Wrong and Violence by which Righteous Persons are too oft oppress't. And thus Guilt is more easily detected, Innocence more certainly relieved, and the Honour and Reverence due to Law and Government, more effectually secur'd for the Publick Good.

Thus in the wisest Nations, the best govern'd Kingdoms and Common-Wealths, such Courts of Judicature have bene constituted, as have consisted of many Persons, invested with Authority for the Administration of Justice. The *Jews*, a People whose Government was founded in the Authority, and confirm'd by the Approbation of GOD Himself, had their *Sanhedrim* *, their Συνέδριον, or *Council* vested with *Judiciary Power*, consisting of Seventy Persons, who were the Elders of *Israel*. All the greater *Cases of Law* were decided by them, and by their Sentence *Capitall Punishments* (till their Power was abridg'd by the *Romans*) were inflicted upon enormous Offendours. Amongst these Seventy Judges, there were two sate as the Chief; one who was called נשיא NASI, the Prince, or *L. Chief Justice*; and the other who was call'd אב בית דין AB BETH DIN, the *Father of the Court*, or of the House of Judgment. Now to their *Sanhedrim* answer our *Assises* †. They are both Words of the same Import and Signification: and there's as great a Correspondency in the Things signify'd. They both denote a Court

* סנהדרין
Mat. 5. 22. *Vide Grotii Annot. in hunc locum.*

Godw. Antiq. lib. 3. c. 1.

† סנהדרין
Συνέδριον, *Consessus, Assessus, Assisis.*

Court of Judicature consisting of many Judges, or Persons invested with Judiciary Power! Such also was the *Court of the Areopagites* among the *Athenians*, and the *Senate of the Romans*.

When there is but *one Judge* who sits alone in Judgment, the guilty Offendour may hope either by his Gold, or Greatness, or by the Favour of Friends to sway him from a *right Sentence*: but when many sit in Judgment, tho' he should be favour'd by one, he may fall by the rest; and there will be no Hope for him to prevail with all, and escape in Judgment. It is therefore very agreeable to right Reason, that a Court of Justice, which is to determine of weighty Matters, should consist of *many Judges*. For so will the Authority be more August, and the Judgment more tremendous.

But that which should procure the greatest Reverence and Veneration to a Court of Justice, is a firm Persuasion of the *Divine Presence*. This comes, in the last Place, to be consider'd, as it is here, by the Psalmist, plainly expresst; *GOD standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty, He judgeth among the Gods.*

GOD then, even the most High GOD, is in a speciall manner present in a Court of Judicature, where Judges and Magistrates are assembled for the Administration of Justice and Judgment; and He not only sees and observes all Things that are there transacted, but by approving and ratifying every right Sentence pronounc't by the Judge, *He judges among the Gods.*

Now as this puts a great *Honour upon the Court*, casts a great *Glory upon the Judges* there assembled; so it

it layes a *mighty Obligation* both upon them, and all other Persons who have any Concern in the Court, or bear any Part in the Administration of Justice, to have a very great Care of their Demeanour, to take very great heed what they speak, what they do, as remembring and considering that they are in the speciall Presence of Almighty GOD.

When the Judges, with attendant Magistrates, are set upon the Bench, to hear Causes, and to do Justice, if the King should cause his Royall Throne to be set in the Court, and should in his own Person come in his Royall Robes, with his Crown glittering on his Head, and the Majesty of GOD shining in his Face, and sit down amongst them, would not this be a great Honour to the Judges? Would not his Presence and Appearing in Royall State, cast a great Lustre upon the Court? Now it is the *Glory of the King*, that he is the *Image of GOD*, and his Vicegerent among men. If then the Great GOD Himself, *by whom Kings reign, and Princes decree Justice*, shall be pleased to vouchsafe His Presence in a *Court of Judicature*, in a Convention of Judges and Magistrates; if He shall *stand amongst the Mighty, judge amongst the Gods*, how great an Honour is this to the Judges! How great a Glory is this to the Court! Well may a man that enters into the Court say, with *Jacob*, after his Vision at *Bethel*, *Surely the LORD is in this Place, and I knew it not. How dreadful is this Place! This is none other but the Court of GOD*, His *House of Judgment*, wherein He stands and judges amongst men.

Prov 8.15.

Gen. 28. 16, 17.

And then what a mighty Awe should the *Presence of GOD* cast both upon the Judges themselves, and the whole Assembly! With what a Reverentiall Regard

gard to the Divine Majesty should all Matters be transacted! All things should be done as under the Eye of a GOD infinite in Wisdom, in Power, in Justice; a GOD and Judge who infinitely hates Iniquity, and who *has appointed a Day wherein He will judge the World in Righteousness*, and call all men, both Great and Small, to a strict Account for all their *Words and Actions*. Acts 17. 31. Eccl. 12. 14. Mat. 12. 37.

Amongst the *Arabians* there was this ancient Custome: In the *Court of Justice* adjoining to the *Chambers of the King*, there hung a *Chain* from the Cazement of a Window into the Court. If any man thought himself to be wrong'd by the Judges, he drew the Chain, and opened the Cazement. Hereupon the King took Cognizance of the Cause: and if the Judges were found faulty, they were presently slain; if the Party complaining was found guilty, he was put to Death. In some Proportion and Correspondency hereunto, shall I say, there is a *Window open in Heaven* over the Court of Justice, and there is nothing there done by the Judges or others, but under the Eye of GOD, the Great King and Supreme Judge, who from his High Throne looks down upon them? This Consideration might be just Ground of great Care and Caution. But, behold! 'tis more which is here asserted by the Psalmist. The Great GOD does not only look down from Heaven, *his Holy Habitation*, upon the Judges of the Court, and observe their Proceedings; but He is really present with them, and stands amongst them. For *GOD standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty: He judgeth among the Gods.*

In a lively Apprehension of the speciall Presence and Superintendency of the Great GOD, how well does it become, how much does it concern the Judges themselves to manage their great Trust and Power with all Fidelity and Circumspection! What can be more fitly and properly spoken to them, than what *Jehoshaphat* spake to the Judges, whom he set in the *Cities of Judah*; or what can more concern them in this Case, than to attend to the *Charge*, which the *King* then gave them, saying, *Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the Judgment? Wherefore now let the Fear of the LORD be upon you; Take heed, and do it,* (שמרו ועשו *Observe and Do, Act with all Circumspection*) *for there is no Iniquity with the LORD our GOD, nor Respect of Persons, nor taking of Gifts. Thus* whatever ye do, *shall ye do in the Fear of the LORD, faithfully, and with a perfect Heart.* For (let me add from the Psalmist) tho' as Gods ye judge men, there stands one amongst you (whom ye see not) who will judge you, even the most High GOD *. For *GOD standeth in the Congregation of the Mighty; and he that is in the midst of them,* (as we may render it) אלהים ישפט *will judge the Judges;* θεὸς διακρινεῖ (as the *LXX* render it) *will judge the Gods.* So act then in the Administration of Justice, that when ye shall stand before the Judgment Seat of GOD, ye may stand approved, and receive that *Crown of Righteousness, which GOD, the Righteous Judge, shall then give to all* just and good men, even to all *them who love His Appearing.*

1 Chron. 19. 5, 6, 7, 9.

*Ἦν σὺ κακῶς δικάσῃς, σὲ Θεὸς μετέπειτα δικάσει. Phocyl.

2 Tim. 4. 8.

In a Word, so act as ye believe GOD Himself would do, were He in your Place in the Nature of man.

man. So shall ye reallize that Great Name which GOD hath given you, and be indeed, as you are stiled, *Gods*, whom Justice, as an *immortal Soul*, animates to a Divine Life, and intitles to an eternal Crown.

And how well does it become all others who attend the *Court of Justice*, to bear upon their Souls a lively Apprehension of the *Divine Presence*; and so to demean themselves in all Concerns as in the *Sight of GOD*! All those especially who shall be bound by the *Religion of an Oath*, to declare and testify the Truth in Matters of Fact which shall be lay'd before them, are mightily concern'd to take great Heed to themselves, that they do faithfully and sincerely acquit themselves, in the Answer and Discharge of so *sacred and solemn an Obligation*. Let them remember that the Eye of GOD, who discerns the *Secrets of all Hearts*, is upon them. Let them remember that That GOD, by whose Name they swear, in whose Presence they stand, and who hears the Words they speak before the Judge; is *a GOD of TRUTH*, who infinitely hates and abhors Lying. *Lying Lips* (saith the Wise man) *are an Abomination to the LORD: but they that deal truly are His Delight*. Yea, *a Lying Tongue* is not less hateful to GOD, than *Hands that shed innocent Blood*: both are *an Abomination to the LORD*. The *telling of a Lye* is so great a Sin in the Account of GOD, that He hath punisht it in some (as *Ananias* and *Sapphira*) with *present Death*; and hath plainly declar'd, He will punish it hereafter with *Hell fire*: how much more horrid and abominable is a *Perjury*, even in the Divine Presence! With what Indignation did King *Nebuchadnezzar* charge the *Magicians* with a Crime

Deut. 32.

Prov. 12.

Prov. 6.

Acts 5. 5.

Rev. 21. 8.

Dan. 2. 9. of this kind; saying, *Ye have prepar'd lying and corrupt Words to speak before Me!* But how much greater a Crime is it for men to prepare lying and corrupt Words, to speak before Almighty GOD Himself, even then when they are bound by a solemn Oath to declare the Truth! May not this justly kindle His wrathful Indignation, to the utter Destruction of such impious men?

How great is the *Mischief* which by a lying Tongue may be done in a Court of Justice! The Course of Justice may be obstructed, and the Stream of Judgment by this means turn'd into a wrong Chanel. By a *false Witness* a man may be overthrown in a *just Cause*, to his utter Ruine. By *a Lye* a man may be de-
Kin. 21. 13. priv'd of his *Life*. The innocent *Naboth*, by the lying Tongues of *two false Witnesses*, was at once depriv'd of his Life and Estate. A lying Tongue is a bloudy *Sword*: and the most unspotted Innocence is not a *Shield* strong enough to secure a man from its fatal Stroke. By means of a lying Tongue the most Innocent may be found Guilty, and the most Guilty may be pronounc'd Innocent.

But let those who shall be concern'd to declare and testify the Truth, in those Matters which shall fall under the Cognizance of the Court, remember and consider, that tho' they may possibly by false Assertions, or sundry Artifices and Disguises, *conceal the Truth* from men, and their Falshood may not be detected by the most discerning; yet 'tis utterly impossible they should *deceive that* GOD before whom they stand: and tho' the Punishment of their Perjury be not inflicted by men, they cannot possibly escape the Vengeance

geance of Almighty GOD. He has established an unchangeable Law against this Sin, which He once, yea, twice, wrote with His own Finger (with the rest of the *Ten Commandments*) upon Tables of Stone. The Law is this: *Thou shalt not take the Name of the LORD thy GOD in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in vain.* Exo. 20. 7. Now he that violates a Sacred and solemn Oath, administred to him in the Name of GOD, does in a high Degree take the Name of GOD in vain. How wofull is the State of this man! For whether by his false Report or Testimony, an Innocent man be pronounced Guilty, or a Guilty man Innocent, he becomes Guilty before GOD, the Great Judge of all, who by a Righteous Sentence will condemn him to the *burning Flames.* For He hath said, *He will not hold him guiltless,* Rev. 21. 8. he will not acquit him, he will certainly condemn him; and then most miserable must his State be for ever and ever. Now what Folly is it for any man, for the Prevention of a just Sentence upon a Guilty man, by a plain Perjury to draw such a dreadful Guilt upon his own Soul! And the Folly is yet greater, and the Guilt more dreadful, if an Innocent man by his false Report or Testimony be condemn'd to Death as Guilty. For he is then at once Guilty of *Perjury and Murder.* He at once contemns GOD, and brings the Bloud of that man upon himself; and so justly deserves no less than *double Damnation.*

Oh then remember all ye that may be concern'd, that when ye come to take an Oath in a Court of Justice, ye stand not only before the Judge, but before GOD Himself, who stands as King and Judge in that Assem-

Assembly, and will certainly avenge upon you the grievous Sin of Perjury, if ye should any way be guilty of it. Remember, O man, O woman, whosoever thou art, who shalt be call'd as *a Witness* of any Matter in the Court, Remember (I say) that Charge which Almighty GOD hath given thee in that Law, which He pronounc't with a Voice of Thunder, from the midst of Flames of Fire, in Mount *Sinai*,
Exo. 20. 16. saying, *Thou shalt not bear false Witness against thy Neighbour.* The very words which GOD then spake are these, לא־תענה ברעך עד שקר *Thou shalt not answer a lying Testimony concerning thy Neighbour*; that is, Being interrogated by the Judge *upon thy Oath*, thou shalt not, in *thy Answer*, give a false or *lying Testimony*, for or against thy Neighbour. This *Oath*, among the *Jews*, the Judge was wont to impose after this man-
1 Kin. 22. 16. 2 Chr. 18. 15. Mat. 26. 63. ner; *I adjure thee by the living GOD that thou tell us the Truth in this Matter.* Hence it's said in the Law, Lev. 5. 1. *If a Soul sin* (that is, If a Crime be committed by any Person) *and* one *hear the Voice of Swearing* (that is, of the Judge adjuring him) *and is a Witness whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his Iniquity* (that is, He shall not only contract the Guilt of the Crime committed, but also bear upon his Soul the Guilt of the Sin of Perjury, and so incur the manifest Danger of eternal Damnation.) And therefore all ye that are concern'd, as ye tender the Honour of Almighty GOD, and the Salvation of your own Souls (which you pledge in your Oath) deal in all Things sincerely and truly, *speak-*
Psal. 15. 2. *ing*, as becomes an *Heir of Heaven, the Truth in your Heart*; that Justice and Judgment may be rightly executed, and you, when you shall stand before the Tribunal of GOD, may appear with Boldness, and give up your Accounts with Joy.

For

For there is a *Great Day* a coming, when all the World ſhall be ſummon'd to appear before the *Judgment-Seat of* GOD. Never was there ſo *Great an Aſſembly* as that, and never ſhall there be any ſo great after it. All the *Kings, Rulers, and Judges* of the Earth, ſhall meet together at that Day: yea, then ſhall all men, both the *Righteous and the Wicked*, both the *Living and the Dead*, ſtand before the Face of the Judge, by his Sentence to be ſeparated one from another, to receive their *Reward or Puniſhment* in their proper Place, from whence they ſhall never return to meet again or ſee one anothers Faces more. This was repreſented in Viſion to St. *John*, who thus reports what he ſaw: *I ſaw* (ſaith he) *a Great white Throne, and Him that ſate on it, from whoſe Face the Earth and the Heaven fled away, and there was found no Place for them. And I ſaw the Dead, ſmall and great, ſtand before* GOD. *And the Books were open'd; and another Book was open'd, which is the Book of Life. And the Dead were judg'd out of thoſe Things which were written in the Books, according to their Works.* What was thus repreſented in *Viſion*, ſhall at length be executed in *Reality*; and we who are here preſent this Day, ſhall make a Part of that *great Appearance*. It infinitely concerns us all to prepare for it, for our *everlaſting State* whether of Happineſs or Miſery will be determin'd by that Sentence or Doom, that ſhall be paſs'd on us at that Day. We ſhall then either with unſpeakable Joy, hear the Judge ſay to us, *Come, ye Bleſſed, inherit the Kingdom*; or with unutterable Horrour and Anguiſh hear thoſe diſmall

Rom. 14. 10.

Rev. 20. 11, 12.

Mat. 25. 34.

mall Words, *Depart, ye Curſed, into everlaſting Fire.* Happy are we this Day, that we have yet Time allow'd us, thro' GOD's indulgent Mercy, to prepare for that Appearance. Happy are we, if we have any of us hitherto walked in ſinfull Waies, that GOD is pleaſed this Day to call to us from Heaven in His Holy Word, ſaying, *Return and Live.* Let's remember, all our *Words* and *Actions* are recorded in thoſe *Books*, which ſhall be lay'd open at that Day. Let us then ſo *ſpeak and do* now, that we may not be afraid or aſham'd that our Words and Deeds ſhould be openly declar'd before all the World then.

41. Ezek. 18. 23, 32.

Let's then look upon the Court of Juſtice, the *Congregation of the Mighty* this Day, wherein *GOD ſtands and judges amongſt the Gods*, as a lively Image of that *Great Aſſiſe*, wherein we ſhall all ſtand before the Tribunall of GOD; whom tho' we now ſee not, we ſhall then behold, manifeſting Himſelf to us in the Humane Nature, but with Great Majeſty and Glory, in the Perſon of CHRIST. *For we muſt all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* Then, as in the Court of Juſtice we ſee the Judge ſitting on the Bench, attended on either Hand with ſeverall Perſons of Prime Quality, veſted with Judiciary Power, we ſhall ſee *the Son of man* (the Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*) *ſitting in the Throne of his Glory, and with Him his Twelve Apoſtles, ſitting upon twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Iſrael.* Then *ſhall the Saints*, by their Aſſociation to Chriſt, and Approbation

2 Cor. 5. 10.

Mat. 19. 28. & Luk. 22. 30.

1 Cor. 6. 2, 3.

bation of his Sentence, have the Honour to *judge Angels, to judge the World.* How glorious a Day will that be to the Just! For *when Christ*, the Judge, *appears, they shall also appear with Him in Glory.* But how terrible, how dreadfull will it be to the Wicked! When we see a Guilty man looking pale at the Bar, while the Judge is pronouncing the Sentence of Death upon him, let's think with our selves, with what Horrour and Trembling will Guilty Sinners appear at the Great Day before the Tribunall of Christ, when the irrevocable Sentence shall be passed upon them, whereby they shall be adjudg'd to the Suffering of the bitter Pains of eternal Death! Oh how will they wring their Hands for Sorrow and Anguish of Heart, wishing they had never, never bene born, rather than by a Life of Sin, which was but for a Moment, have plung'd themselves into those unutterable Sorrows, those intolerable Torments which shall last to Eternity! Now what considering man would for the *Gain of the whole World*, nay for a Thousand Worlds be in the wofull State of a Guilty Sinner at the Judgment-Day? Col. 3. 4.

If a Picture of the Day of Judgment (as it is said) became the Means of the Conversion of a barbarous * King to true Christianity; how much more powerfull and efficacious should so *lively an Image* and Representation thereof, as is a Court of Justice, wherein the Judge sits upon Life and Death, be for the Conversion of men to GOD, for the Persuasion of those who have hitherto liv'd in Sin and Wickedness, to break off their

* *Bogaris* King of *Bulgaria.*

evil Courſes, and lead a New Life? Yea, let the
Mal. 4. 5. Conſideration of the Coming of *the Great and Dreadful Day of the* LORD, awake us all to a ſpeedy and ſerious Care for the Salvation of our immortal Souls. Let's make our Peace with GOD, by a hearty Repentance for our paſt Offences; and earneſtly implore the Aids of His Grace, that we may honour Him for the Time to come by a better Obedience. Let the *Fear* of a deſerved *Puniſhment* reſtrain us from Vice and Sin, and the *Hope* of a Glorious *Reward* quicken us to an unwearied Diligence in well-doing. Let's ſo manage every Action and Affair of Importance, as if we ſhould be immediately ſummon'd to Judgment. Let's demean our ſelves every Day of our Lives with ſuch a Holy Circumſpection, as if we look'd every Day, every Night
2 Pet. 3. 10, 11, 12. when this Great Day ſhould begin. For, *the Day of the* LORD *will come as a Thief in the Night, in the which the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great Noiſe, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat; the Earth alſo, and the Works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up. Seeing then that all theſe Things ſhall be diſſolv'd, what manner of Perſons ought we to be in all Holy Converſation and*
Heb. 12. 28, 29. *Godlineſs? Let's then have Grace that we may ſerve* GOD *acceptably, with Reverence and Godly Fear. For our* GOD *is a conſuming Fire.* And then when that Great Day is come we ſhall appear before GOD, our Judge, with *ex-*
1 Pet. 4. 13. *ceeding Joy*, and being there openly honour'd before men and Angels, by His gracious Acknowledgement of our Services and Sufferings for His Name and Glory, we ſhall aſcend

in

in Triumph into His eternall Kingdom, where we shall for ever live and reign with our Blessed Lord and Saviour *JESUS CHRIST*; To whom be Majesty, Dominion, and Glory, now and for evermore; *AMEN.*

FINIS.

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